

Lessons in prayer, from a dog

by [Rodney Clapp](#) in the [February 12, 2008](#) issue

He assumes his still posture
two feet from the table.
He is not grabby,
his tongue is not hanging out,
he is quiet.

He wants to leap,
he wants to snap up
meat and blood.
You can tell.
But what he does is sit
as the gods
his masters and mistresses
fork steak and potatoes
into their mouths.

He is expectant
but not presumptuous.
He can wait.
He can live with disappointment.
He can abide frustration
and suffer suspense.

He watches
for signals,
he listens for calls
of his name from above.

At hints that
he may be gifted
with a morsel,

he intensifies his
already rapt concentration,
he looks his god
in the eye,
but humbly,
sure of his innocence
in his need,
if his need only.

On the (often rare) occasions
when gifts are laid on his tongue,
he takes them whole,
then instantly resumes
the posture of attention,
beseeching, listening, alert,
the posture of hard-won faith
that will take no for an answer,
yet ever and again hopefully
return to the questioning.